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Your Ref: 2021/1090
Our Ref: ATE/23/00773/HYB
Date: 15 November 2023

Active Travel England Planning Response Detailed Response to an Application for Planning Permission

From: Planning & Development Division, Active Travel England

To: , Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council

Application Ref: 2021/1090

Site Address: Land south of Barugh Green Road and east of Higham
Common Road, Barnsley

Description of development: Hybrid application for residential development for 1,560 dwellings comprising: a) Full planning permission for: earthworks to create development platforms; strategic drainage ponds/dry detention basins and associated drainage infrastructure; construction of a new link road; location of strategic landscaping and ecological areas; demolition of existing buildings; works to Hermit Lane; and erection of Phase 1(a) residential development comprising 216 dwellings, b) Outline planning permission for: Residential development comprising up to 1,344 dwellings; new primary school; small shops and community facilities; and associated infrastructure works (Amended Description and Amended Plans).

Notice is hereby given that Active Travel England's formal recommendation is as follows:

- a. ~~**No Objection:** ATE has undertaken a detailed assessment of this application and is content with the submission.~~
- b. ~~**Conditional approval:** ATE recommends approval of the application, subject to the agreement and implementation of planning conditions and/or obligations as set out in this response.~~
- c. **Deferral:** ATE is not currently in a position to support this application and requests further assessment, evidence, revisions and/or dialogue as set out in this response.
- d. ~~**Refusal:** ATE recommends that the application be refused for the reasons set out in this response.~~

1.0 Background

Active Travel England (ATE) welcomes the opportunity to comment on this planning application for 1,560 dwellings, the strategic Claycliffe link road, a new primary school and civic centre. The application is a hybrid application with full permission sought for Phase 1 (216 dwellings), and outline permission for the remainder of the development. ATE notes that the two primary access points at the north and south boundary of the site already have planning permission.

2.0 Summary

Barnsley Borough Moving from A to B was published in 2022 and outlines the local authority's transport strategy for the next decade and beyond, with a focus on more sustainable and active travel. This document highlights that there is potential for cycling to be more common in Barnsley and an objective of this document is to increase the cycling mode share for trips in Barnsley. In discussing the existing network page 28 states, "there are still many gaps, particularly at busy road junctions that remain unattractive and create physical and perceived barriers to lots of 'would be' cyclists." It goes on to comment on the need for dedicated highway infrastructure for cyclists as a key tool for encouraging more people to cycle in Barnsley.

This is supported by national design guidance and government strategies which also seek to encourage a mode shift in encouraging greater walking, wheeling and cycling across England, with new developments expected to play a role in delivering healthy and attractive places. While ATE recognises that there are elements of the landscaping and grid-like layout which will be effective, there is significant concern that appropriate infrastructure is not proposed to ensure that the Claycliffe link road and its roundabouts will not be detrimental to the new community by acting as a barrier to those who would consider to walking, wheeling or cycling through the site. Provision for pedestrians and cyclists travelling along and across this highway should be compliant with LTN 1/20 to encourage active travel and this infrastructure should be joined-up and accessible for all. ATE would also recommend that greater consideration be given to how trips to and from the proposed school will be attractive for active travel and would query the positioning of the school, which is encircled by what will be all of the busiest roads in the development. Comments are also provided on whether the street design of Phase 1 could be improved through improved permeability to the west, enhanced on-street landscaping and surface materials to create more attractive, pedestrian-friendly streets.

ATE considers that the application as submitted does not demonstrate that appropriate opportunities to promote sustainable transport modes have been taken up in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) paragraph 110a. It is therefore recommended that this application should not be determined until further information has been submitted and reviewed.

3.0 National Policy and Guidance

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

104. Transport issues should be considered from the earliest stages of... development proposals, so that:

c) opportunities to promote walking, cycling and public transport use are identified and pursued.

110. In assessing specific applications for development, it should be ensured that:

- a) appropriate opportunities to promote sustainable transport modes can be – or have been – taken up, given the type of development and its location; [and]
- b) safe and suitable access to the site can be achieved for all users.

112. Applications for development should:

- a) give priority first to pedestrian and cycle movements, both within the scheme and with neighbouring areas...;
- b) address the needs of people with disabilities and reduced mobility in relation to all modes of transport; [and]
- c) create places that... minimise the scope for conflicts between pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles...;

113. All developments that will generate significant amounts of movement should be required to provide a travel plan, and the application should be supported by a transport statement or transport assessment so that the likely impacts of the proposal can be assessed.

130. Planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments...

- f) create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and well-being, with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users; and where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion and resilience.

131 Planning policies and decisions should ensure that new streets are tree-lined.

Local Transport Note 1/20 (LTN 1/20)

LTN 1/20 provides guidance to local authorities on delivering high quality, cycle infrastructure. More specifically relevant to this application are sections 4, 6, 8, 10, 11 & 13.

Gear Change: a bold vision for cycling and walking

Gear Change is the Government's cycling and walking plan for England. This sets the Government's vision for cycling and walking to be the natural first choice for many journeys with half of all journeys in towns and cities being cycled or walked by 2030. Active Travel England's responsibilities for walking also extend to "wheeling", such as the use of wheelchairs (self-propelled or powered) and mobility scooters.

Inclusive mobility: making transport accessible for passengers and pedestrians

Provides guidance on designing and improving the accessibility and inclusivity of public transport and pedestrian infrastructure.

National Design Guide

The National Design Guide outlines the Government's expectations for positive design in new developments. Section M2 relates to active travel and states the following:

- (79) In a well designed place, all modes of transport are positively designed into the built form. They are integrated into public spaces with character that people enjoy using. People move around in attractive street"

- (82) “Priority is given to pedestrian and cycle movements, subject to location and the potential to create connections. Prioritising pedestrians and cyclists mean creating routes that are safe, direct, convenient and accessible for people of all abilities. These are designed as part of attractive spaces with good sightlines, and well chosen junctions and crossings, so that people want to use them. Public rights of way are protected, enhanced and well-linked into the wider network of pedestrian and cycle routes.
- (83) In well-designed places, people should not need to rely on the car for everyday journeys, including getting to workplaces, shops, schools and other facilities, open spaces or the natural environment. Safe and direct routes with visible destinations or clear signposting encourage people to walk and cycle.”

4.0 Opportunities

The application site benefits from a range of attributes which have the potential to facilitate walking, wheeling and cycling as set out below:

- The scale of the development, with a primary school, civic centre, and adjacent employment areas, means that there is potential for day-to-day amenities to be located within reasonable walking, wheeling and cycling distances for future residents.
- The landscape buffer to the link road, and approach to encouraging its use as a social space has the potential to be effective.
- The grid-like layout can create direct routes for pedestrians and cyclists.
- Internal permeability is strong with regular footpath links and very limited use of cul-de-sacs.

For these opportunities to be realised, ATE considers that improvements to the active travel infrastructure will be required in order to enhance this development in line with current government policy and design guidance and to meet the expectations for more ambitious walking, wheeling and cycling targets.

5.0 Areas of Concern

In its current form, this application does not demonstrate a commitment to how the proposed development will ensure that active travel modes are prioritised. ATE's detailed assessment is provided below.

Claycliffe Link

ATE recognises that the Claycliffe link road is a strategic objective to improve connectivity in west Barnsley and relieve traffic pressure on neighbouring roads. ATE also recognises that considerable thought has gone into trying to soften its impact visually. However, equally careful consideration needs to be given to how the link road can be designed to avoid it being a barrier to encouraging active travel choices through the development. The straight, wide carriageway is likely to encourage faster vehicle speeds and its need as a strategic link clearly suggests the volume of traffic will also be significant and is likely to include larger vehicles. This is not an environment generally considered conducive to encouraging walking, wheeling and cycling, and therefore to overcome this the quality of active travel infrastructure will need to be high.

Shared use path

- The proposed Claycliffe link road includes 3m-wide shared footways-cycleways on either side of the carriageway. Shared use routes (i.e. a path or surface which is available for use by both pedestrians and cyclists) should be avoided along all new streets, unless they fit within the limited acceptable situations listed in LTN 1/20 (see paragraph 6.5.6 and section 1.6 (2)) and ATE does not consider this development to meet these criteria. Section 1.6 (2) of LTN 1/20 states that “on urban streets, cyclists must be physically separated from pedestrians and should not share space with pedestrians.” This is further supported by paragraph 6.5.4 which states, “the conversion of a footway to shared use should be regarded as a last resort. Shared use facilities are generally not favoured by either pedestrians or cyclists.”
- Page 21 of Gear Change outlines the Government’s key design principles for encouraging cycling and these include the following:
 - “Cyclists must be separated from volume traffic, both at junctions and on the stretches of road between them;
 - Cyclists must be separated from pedestrians;
 - Cyclists must be treated as vehicles, not pedestrians.”
- Section 6.4 of Manual for Streets includes the following guidance, “If cycle tracks are provided, they should be physically segregated from footways/footpaths if there is sufficient width available” and on footways/shared paths, “the fear of being struck by cyclists is a significant concern for many disabled people.”
- To be in accordance with national design guidance, the development should therefore provide dedicated space for cyclists on or alongside the Claycliffe link road. ATE would advise that the most appropriate infrastructure in this case would be cycle tracks adjacent to footways. ATE would advise that footways be 2m wide and cycle tracks run alongside these, separated from the carriageway by the grass verge as already proposed. The segregation between the cycle track and footway can be achieved through level changes (see Figure 6.3 of LTN 1/20) and ATE would advise that materials also differ to provide clear, visually segregated spaces.
- LTN 1/20 advises that the desired width of cycle tracks is 2m, and ATE would recommend that attempts are made to achieve this given that this would provide space for comfortable overtaking, as well as for two people cycling side-by-side (e.g. a parent with a child). The absolute minimum width of the cycle track should be 1.5m. ATE would welcome discussions with the applicant and local highway authority in regard to the preferred approach to widths, surfacing and segregation, if desired.
- ATE recommends that segregated cycle tracks be employed along the full length of the Claycliffe link road, and also on the primary road that runs between the two roundabouts past the entrance to the school and civic centre.

Roundabouts

- To successfully create an active travel network the above stretches of cycle tracks and footways must be supported by infrastructure that does not give up at the more difficult moments, as these will often be where the risk of conflict is highest and where less confident or mobile users are most discouraged.
- Within this site the two proposed roundabouts are a significant barrier to active travel due to their size and the nature of roundabouts.
- Paragraph 10.7.3 of LTN 1/20 states the following on roundabouts, “normal roundabouts with flared geometry and no additional cycle facilities are unsuitable for most people wishing to cycle and can pose a high risk even for experienced

cyclists. New roundabouts on all-purpose roads should be provided with cycle facilities as recommended in this guidance, unless there are clearly-defined and suitable alternative routes.”

- Section 10.7 of LTN 1/20 offers extensive guidance on how cyclists can be accommodated on and around roundabouts to provide adequate protection and encourage cycling; and while this guidance is aimed at cyclists, its principles also apply to pedestrians who will face the same issues in attempting to cross large, high-capacity roundabouts. ATE would expect the applicant to make use of this and recommends the existing approach is improved to provide higher quality infrastructure and crossing facilities for active travel modes.
- Designing roundabouts to provide space and crossings for cyclists and pedestrians is one potential approach, however it is noted that the link road will involve significant earthworks and ATE would query whether grade-separated crossings could be incorporated effectively; see section 10.8 of LTN 1/20 for further guidance. The provision for cyclists and pedestrians to pass underneath the carriageway can provide direct uninterrupted flows for these users, but also for vehicles using the carriageway. Figure 10.48 shows an example from the Netherlands, but a UK example where underpasses have been employed effectively and resulted in high levels of cycling and walking despite a busy road and roundabouts is Kesgrave in Ipswich (see the Ropes Drive junctions with the A1214). These need to be accompanied by careful design choices to ensure they are attractive and safe, but can result in highly successful active travel routes.

Crossings

- ATE also raises concern with the use of narrow uncontrolled crossings on the Claycliffe link road as the only means of crossing the highway outside of the roundabouts. It is again advised that the applicant reviews guidance contained within LTN 1/20 on successful crossings – see table 10-2, and section 10.4.
- Given the speed and volume of traffic, ATE would prefer to see at least one of the link road crossings adjacent to Phase 1 be designed to be a crossing (with parallel cycle crossing) that gives greater priority to pedestrians and cyclists through either a zebra or toucan crossing.
- The crossing east of plot 62 would be ATE’s recommendation as the priority to improve as this is more central, and in terms of the wider masterplan more clearly forms a part of a desire line from Phase 1 and Higham towards the NEAP, the other residential phases and potentially the local centre.
- A similar review should be applied to the proposed uncontrolled crossings between the two roundabouts, and south of the southern roundabout. The level of improvements recommended here will be dependent on other improvements to crossing facilities at the roundabouts.

Surfacing

- ATE has found limited information on surfacing, however all surfaces should be bound to ensure they are suitable for all users. The use of gravel, even self-binding gravel, can often result in surfaces not suitable for those in wheelchairs and also often degrade faster resulting in uneven or wet paths.
- Within Phase 1 ATE would also support the use of higher quality materials within selected level surface streets to support pedestrian friendly environments, as part of the points raised above. Using different materials to clearly differentiate on-street parking is also encouraged.

Proposed school site

- ATE has significant concern in regard to the positioning and design of the proposed school site within the development.
- The primary school is expected to have capacity to be a 2FE school and therefore 420 pupils could potentially travel to and from the surrounding residential areas each day. The school therefore represents a significant trip destination within the site and is also one where there should be targets for high active travel mode shares.
- For this to be achieved pupils and parents need to see walking, wheeling, cycling and scootering to the school as a safe and attractive choice. This will generally mean routes away from high volumes or fast moving motor traffic and safe crossings.
- The school is proposed to be sited between two roundabouts on the Claycliffe link road which means that any trips from phases on the west side of the link road will need to cross the link road and concerns raised in the section above are relevant here.
- Additionally, the entrance to the school and civic centre sits between the two junctions that filter vehicles from three of the residential phases to and from the link road and as such these junctions, particularly at peak AM and PM hours, could be expected to have a fairly constant flow of traffic. Positioning the school entrance between these will create an environment where conflict between pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles is more likely.
- The proposed school, and the civic centre, will effectively be encircled by the link road and the busiest section of primary street. ATE's view is that this is unlikely to create an environment where residents from within and outside of the site would be encouraged to walk, wheel and cycle.
- ATE would recommend that the applicant consider how this could be improved through the use of filtering, pedestrianised areas or even a more comprehensive relocation of the school's location.
- If the applicant and LPA are of the view that this is the only possible arrangement for the school and civic centre, then ATE would recommend that the footways, cycle tracks and crossings need to be of considerable quality to avoid creating a car-dominated environment that discourages walking, wheeling and cycling. This would include the use of zebra crossings, footways and cycle tracks separated from the carriageway and segregated from each other, with footway widths being in excess of the minimum standards.

Phase 1

Links to Higham

- Phase 1 shows two pedestrian and cycle links through to the existing residential area west of the development site and ATE has some concerns about their quality and accessibility.
- The link between plots 115 and 116 is shown as a 2m-wide footway only and it would appear as though a wider, more attractive link could be made. ATE would advise this is increased in width to a minimum of 3m to accommodate all users travelling in both directions.
- The second connection includes a winding step-free route, presumably to accommodate level changes. The passage through between the dwellings on Avon Close is then very narrow, unlit and has informal surfacing, and therefore is not suitable for all users.

- It is not clear whether a link is proposed between 33 and 35 Welland Court.
- For those in this site, or in Higham, who use wheelchairs, have mobility impairments or are with a pushchair, the level of permeability between these two areas will be poor. In winter months or after dark for almost all users the pedestrian links between Higham and the development site will be limited to the main vehicular access points, or between plots 115 and 116. For the scale of the development, this limited permeability is a concern and the local authority should consider whether this complies with NPPF paragraph 112(a) which requires developments to give priority to the movement of pedestrians and cyclists between a scheme and neighbouring areas.
- If full details of access are reserved, then the local planning authority will need to be content that the pedestrian and cycle links indicated are appropriate and achievable. However, ATE would encourage more details are submitted in regard to these potential links to Higham.

Pedestrian-friendly design

- Although there are pocket parks, the design approach to Phase 1 appears to be car-dominant with no variation in street hierarchy; in some regards this approach is outdated and fails to follow more recent design guidance which seeks to take advantage of opportunities to create more attractive streets. Paragraph 131 of the NPPF states that new streets should be tree-lined where possible, and yet outside of the pocket parks and buffer to the link road there is no landscaping proposed on the streets of Phase 1 itself. In some cases, this creates quite long stretches of highway that will be dominated by the carriageway and parked vehicles. This approach does not create attractive streets that encourages residents to walk from their houses.
- Paragraph 79 of the National Design Guide supports this, stating “in a well designed place, all modes of transport are positively designed into the built form. They are integrated into public spaces with character that people enjoy using. People move around in attractive streets... Well-designed streets create attractive public spaces with character, through their layout, landscape, including street trees, lighting, street furniture and materials.”

6.0 Next Steps

In consideration of the above, ATE recommend that the Local Planning and Highway Authority considers the following points to discuss with the applicant:

- Removal of the shared use paths adjacent to the Claycliffe link road, to be replaced by segregated footways and cycle tracks. A similar arrangements should be shown indicatively on the road between the roundabout that passes the school and civic centre.
- Improvements to the proposed uncontrolled refuge crossings to provide greater priority to pedestrians and cyclists, with segregated crossing space to comply with LTN 1/20.
- Alterations to the design approach to the two roundabouts within the site, with the intention of overcoming the barrier the current design will represent to pedestrians and cyclists. LTN 1/20 provides guidance on roundabout design that provides better protection for cyclists which should inform a new design and/or consideration should be given to the feasibility of grade-separated crossings. The intention should be to provide joined up, high-quality active travel infrastructure along the link road,

across roundabouts and crossings and along the primary road past the school and local centre.

- A review of the design, access and location of the school site to consider how vehicle traffic can be routed away from the school entrance or how high-quality active travel infrastructure will overcome the current approach.
- Consideration and full details (surfacing, width and lighting) of the number and quality of pedestrian and cycle links between Phase 1 (and the wider site) and Higham.
- Improvements to the landscaping and street design in Phase 1 with the intention of creating more attractive, pedestrian-friendly streets in accordance with national design guidance.

ATE requests that the local planning authority shares this correspondence with the applicant and their agents. ATE would be content to review further submitted information to help address the above identified deficiencies with a view to providing a further response and recommended conditions and obligations, subject to receiving this information.